

Thank you, Chairman Coleman and Chairman Tong, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Anne Hughes, from Sharon, CT, I have been a member of Northwest Prevention Network for 5 years, and did my fieldwork for my Masters of Social Work with Housatonic Youth Service Bureau and CT's Legislative Commission on Aging, respectively, as well as Co-Directed Silver Lake Conference Center in Sharon, CT's outdoor ministry camp for youth ages 8-18, for the past 11 years. I now serve as Program Director for HousingUs, a Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation initiative, seeding affordable housing in the tri-corner rural area of CT, MA and NY.

I am speaking as a Social Work Advocate Practitioner from the field in strong support of SB650 An Act Concerning Temporary Restraining Orders and HB6848, An Act Protecting Victims of Domestic Violence and HB6962 An Act Concerning Firearm Safety.

When I was serving as a Case Manager for Mountain Comprehensive Care Center mental health clinic in Pikeville KY during the late 80's, many, many women were referred to us for an outpatient (intake) evaluation by the local hospital, following discharge for broken jaws and broken bones and severe injuries caused by intimate partner violence. Several cases stand out all too vividly, of mothers very reluctant to disclose the facts of her situation in our psycho-social evaluation on Fri., and dead by Mon. Time after time, shot and killed by her partner, during the very dangerous/vulnerable period directly following the victim's disclosure and reaching out for help. I participated in domestic violence advocacy training as a result of my own frustration as a Case Manager, but the protections at the time were so few, so inadequate, so weak, so unconscionably helpless in the face of such grave danger and widespread armament of offenders in a culture that enabled the cycle of intimate violence that terrorized so many families and children, that I could not sustain my volunteer role in that system as advocate, in the wake of so many dead clients. I moved back to my homestate of CT, continuing to work to address the underlying causes and complicit systems of violence.

Now in CT, thankfully, all family violence victim advocates are certified domestic violence counselors who not only explain the court process to the victim, but they also help the victim establish a safety plan, a critical piece to making a restraining order effective.

- This bill SB650, also proposes broadening the methods by which respondents may be given legal notice of ex parte restraining orders.

This bill also proposes reducing firearm/ammunition surrender/transfer time down from 2 business days to 24 hours for anyone who becomes ineligible to possess firearms/ammunition as a result of a restraining or protective order.

- Currently, CT state law prohibits anyone who is the subject of a one-year restraining order from possessing firearms or ammunition following notice of said order and a chance to be heard (CGS § 53a-217).
- This bill proposes amending that statute to remove the requirement of a hearing, effectively meaning that individuals who are the subject of temporary, ex parte restraining orders would also be ineligible to possess firearms and ammunition.
- So this proposal results in someone who has placed a family member in immediate and present physical danger losing their firearm for the two week period covered by the ex parte order.
- The most dangerous time for a victim of domestic violence is when she or he takes steps to end the relationship. Because domestic violence is all about power and control of one partner over the other, this can be a particularly difficult time for the abuser, who will begin to realize that he or she is losing control over their victim. This may result in the offender taking more extreme actions to regain control. **This is exactly** the time that firearms should be removed from the equation.
- Again, this would be a temporary, two week removal of firearms and ammunition. If at the two-week hearing a judge does not grant a full, one-year restraining order, the respondent would have their firearms and ammunition returned.
- This bill also proposes reducing the amount of time to surrender or transfer firearms and ammunition for someone who has become ineligible them because they are the subject of a civil restraining order or criminal protective order. The proposal reduces that time from 2 business days to 24 hours, again increasing protections for victims of domestic violence at the most dangerous time, when the victim has reached out for help and disclosed the danger to the protective systems.
- CT averaged 14 intimate partner homicides annually between 2000 and 2012. Guns were the most commonly used weapon (used in 39% of the homicides). State laws prohibiting firearm possession by persons subject restraining orders reduced rates of intimate partner homicide of women by 12-13% and overall by 10%. As many of the proponents of this bill have stated – it is relatively easy to return a gun after two weeks, but a bullet cannot be unfired.

HB 6848, An Act Protecting Victims of Domestic Violence:

I strongly support this proposal to remove the requirement for a hearing to have occurred for individuals to become ineligible to possess firearms and ammunition when they are the subject of a restraining order, meaning that anyone who is the

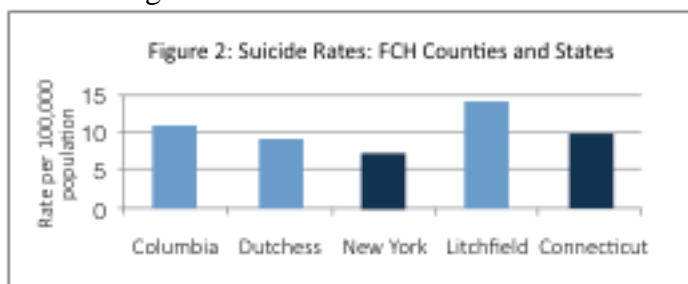
subject of an ex parte restraining orders prior to a hearing would be ineligible to possess firearms or ammunition, due to the behavioral threat and violence the subject has already demonstrated to family members. Subjects of ex parte restraining orders have forfeited the right of law-abiding citizens to access to dangerous, lethal firearms for the sake of safety of their family.

We commend Governor Malloy on introducing this legislation to protect victims of domestic violence across our state, regardless of socio-economic status.

In regards to HB6962 An Act Concerning Firearm Safety, and following last weekend's child in Monroe accidentally getting shot by his father in another room, such deadly dangers would be addressed by modifying the current statutes regarding safe storage of firearms in the following ways:

- A person would be guilty of criminally negligent storage of a firearm (not just a loaded firearm) if any person obtains the firearm and causes the injury or death of himself or any other person. Current statute limits the offense to loaded firearms obtained by minors, persons prohibited from possessing firearms, or persons posing imminent personal risk.

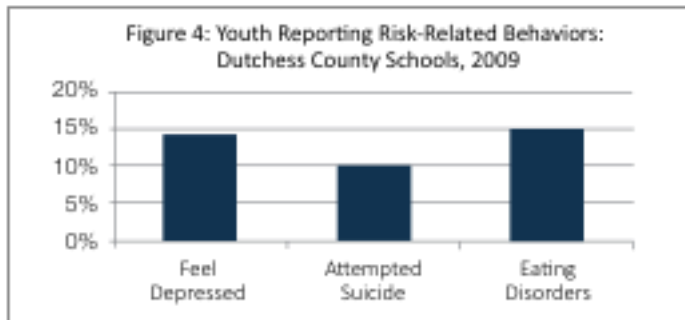
Finally, I urge committee members to remember that the multiple tragedies of Sandy Hook occurred in the context of a single, spectacle-driven, horrific suicide. Suicide is not inevitable, and according to the American Medical Association, a preventable hazard. The United States has far higher rates of firearm deaths—firearm homicides, firearm suicides, and unintentional firearm deaths compared with other high-income countries. The US overall suicide rate is not out of line with these countries, but US firearm suicide rates were 5.8 times higher than in the other countries (*J Trauma*, 2011 Jan; 70(1):238-43. doi: 10.1097/TA.0b013e3181dbaddf.) Among CT youth (Grades 9-12), 14% have seriously considered suicide, 11% have made a suicide plan, and 7% have attempted suicide (CT Suicide Advisory Board). The risk of suicide connected with a household firearm concerns not only the gun owner, but all household members. In fact, the relative risk for adolescents in the household is larger than that for the gun owner.



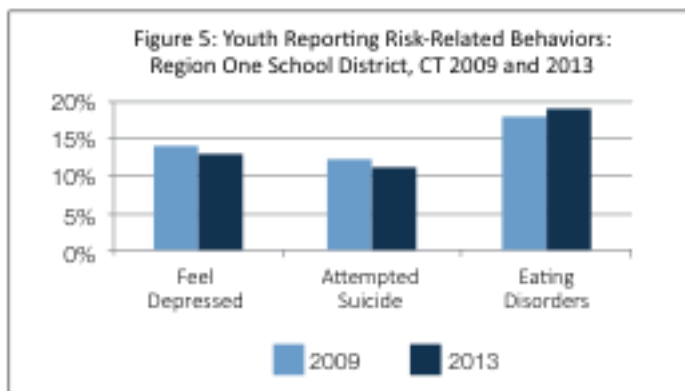
SOURCE: Connecticut Office of the Chief State Medical Examiner, 2012.
New York State Department of Health, 2009-2011.

We're just now moving in the right direction in the northwest corner of CT, reducing our high rate of suicide, reducing risky behavior in young people, according to our recent Region One Search Institute Survey results from 2013. The firearm safety and safe storage of deadly firearms builds on that progress.

And it is in my experience of decades in human services, that protecting victims of domestic violence and disarming Temporary Restraining Order subjects, further prevents deadly, impulsive and preventable violent deaths, by reducing access to firearms.



SOURCE: Search Institute, Developmental Assets Survey, 2009. Sampled students grades 8, 10, and 12.



SOURCE: Search Institute, Developmental Assets Survey, 2009 and 2013. Sampled students grades 7, 9, and 11.

We all own the tragedy of Sandy Hook. I urge CT to lead the solution-based changes in its wake and reduce further the risks to more preventable tragedy and deadly firearm violence across our beautiful state. Thank you.